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PP RUEHCHI RUEHCN RUEHDT RUEHHM  
DE RUEHHI #0192/01 0620951  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 030951Z MAR 09  
FM AMEMBASSY HANOI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9240  
INFO RUEHXS/ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHHM/AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH PRIORITY 5640  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0267

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HANOI 000192

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

FOR EAP/MLS, DRL, DRL/IRF

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/03/2019  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [MNUC](#) [PARM](#) [UNSC](#) [NPT](#) [BM](#) [CH](#)  
SU, XA, XW, VM  
SUBJECT: CHARGE AND MFA DISCUSS BURMA, NORTH KOREA, DARFUR;  
NONPROLIFERATION; HUMAN RIGHTS

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Classified By: CDA Virginia Palmer. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: In a wide-ranging lunch discussion March 2, the CDA and the MFA's Director General for International Organizations, Le Hoai Trung, exchanged views on Burma, North Korea, and Darfur; Vietnam's territorial claims under the Law of the Sea; and nonproliferation. The CDA urged DG Trung, who is also responsible for human rights matters, to facilitate long awaited permission for the publication of a Hmong-language Bible and to permit political activist Father Nguyen Van Ly to keep a Bible donated by the Archbishop of Hue; she also raised the case of Bloc 8406 dissident Vu Hung. DG Trung confirmed that the Committee for Religious Affairs would be responsible for a rescheduled USCIRF visit and proposed a June date for the next bilateral human rights dialogue. The CDA and DG Trung offered sharply divergent views of the recently released Human Rights Report. END SUMMARY.

Burma: An Unstable Country in an Unstable Region  
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12. (C) Meeting with the CDA over lunch March 2, the MFA's Director General for International Organizations Le Hoai Trung explained that prior to taking up its seat on the Security Council, the MFA's Diplomatic Academy (DAV) undertook an exhaustive evaluation of the issues that would likely generate the most controversy -- Iran, North Korea, Darfur, Kosovo, and Burma. As part of its Burma review, the study argued that Southeast Asia as a region remained fundamentally unstable. Trung, citing "near rebellion" in Southern Thailand and attempted coups in the Philippines, said that this was even more the case today. The DAV concluded that because Burma was the least stable country in an already insecure part of the world, the international community should be careful in how it approaches the issue, lest Burma's multi-ethnic population slide into further unrest. Adding his own analysis, DG Trung insisted that Burma needs a "strong government" to keep the country's multi-ethnic population from descending into chaos.

13. (C) DG Trung provided a familiar critique of U.S.-led sanctions, noting that China's support made the Burmese regime even more resistant to outside pressure. He was decidedly less voluble, however, when invited to offer suggestions on how the United States, Vietnam, and ASEAN could productively engage Burma, urging only "engagement, strategically." He acknowledged that Vietnam was eager to share its own experiences in implementing economic reform and emerging from international isolation. Pushed to elaborate, Trung could provide little detail, but suggested

that an "economic forum" in Burma with regional or international participation, might provide a useful venue for such an exchange.

¶4. (SBU) The CDA emphasized that in conducting its policy review, the United States was committed to seeking input from interested parties -- key ASEAN members in particular -- and urged Vietnam to use its influence to encourage Burma to take positive steps along the lines that the Security Council outlined in its 2007 statement.

North Korea: It Takes Two  
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¶5. (C) DG Trung offered a similar diagnosis for North Korea, though he was less optimistic that engagement would produce results. Trung cited a conversation he had two-three years ago in which a Cuban group expressed doubts that Pyongyang's leadership was willing to do what it takes to normalize its relations with the outside world. Based on his own experience, Trung shared these doubts. Nevertheless, he said that it was worth the effort, suggesting that the United States should work to "lighten" what he termed a legacy of mistrust left over from the previous U.S. administration. The CDA noted that while the Obama administration was more flexible in its diplomatic approach, this did not change the fundamental goal of a denuclearized Korean Peninsula or the administration's commitment to the Six-Party process.

Darfur: Vietnam firmly opposed to Bashir Indictment  
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¶6. (SBU) DG Trung reiterated his government's opposition to the International Criminal Court's indictment of Sudan

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President Omar al-Bashir, arguing that the move would likely push Vietnam's own accession to the ICC "further down the road." The CDA emphasized that whatever Vietnam's general position, the indictment was a near certainty. She urged Vietnam to be muted in its response, noting that there were not enough votes for an Article 16 deferral. For its part, the United States does not believe that a UNSC statement is necessary unless there is significant violence or Khartoum reacts in an extreme fashion. DG Trung took note of the message and said that Hanoi had not yet crafted instructions to its UN Mission.

Vietnamese Claims and the Law of the Sea  
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¶7. (C) DG Trung confirmed that Vietnam would try to meet the May 15 deadline to submit an extended continental shelf claim to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. Referring to the recent action by the Philippines legislature asserting its claim, Trung said that formal protests by the Chinese and Vietnamese governments notwithstanding, Vietnam was not particularly exorcised by the action. What really matters, Trung continued, are territorial assertions (read: China's) that carry the threat of force. Trung said that ASEAN has an important role to play in countering China's claims, or at least in moderating its behavior. Telegraphing frustration at ASEAN's very low key engagement on the issue, Trung cautioned that ASEAN should not "overplay" its hand lest it provoke an aggressive response.

Nonproliferation and HEU  
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¶8. (SBU) DG Trung praised Secretary Clinton's statement that the United States would seek to revive negotiations toward a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT), including provisions for international verification, saying that this could very well break the deadlock that had prevented

adoption of a FMCT. Turning to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), he emphasized Vietnam's position that all three pillars of the NPT must be given equal weight and expressed hope that the Obama Administration would pursue disarmament more aggressively.

¶9. (SBU) The CDA assured DG Trung that nonproliferation was a priority for the new administration and said that in this area. Following on EAP DAS Scot Marciel's February 25 discussions (septel), the CDA urged Vietnam to formally respond to the U.S. dipnote on the second stage of the transfer of Russian-origin spent nuclear fuel from the research reactor at the Nuclear Research Center at Dalat.

#### USCIRF and the Human Rights Dialogue

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¶10. (SBU) The CDA and DG Trung exchanged preliminary information about the visit of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) and the Human Rights Dialogue. Trung confirmed that the Prime Minister's office had formally assigned responsibility for the USCIRF visit to the Committee for Religious Affairs (CRA), though the MFA would do what it can to assist. He emphasized, though that the sooner the GVN were informed of the USCIRF's dates, the easier it would be to coordinate the visit. On the HR Dialogue, Trung noted that most of the relevant MFA leadership would be in Geneva in early May for its Universal Periodic Review. He suggested June as a preliminary time frame.

#### Bibles for the Hmong and for Father Ly; Vu Hung

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¶11. (SBU) The CDA urged Vietnam to accelerate the process for approving a Hmong-language Bible translation, expressing frustration that bureaucratic inertia between the CRA and the Ministry of Education and Training was delaying what should be a fairly non-controversial step. She also urged the MFA to look into reports that Nguyen Van Ly was not able to keep a Bible given to him by the Archbishop of Hue during a recent prison visit. The CDA also raised the MFA's denial of her request to see Vu Hung, who remains in pretrial detention and has reportedly been denied access to legal counsel and his family. DG Trung took note of U.S. concerns but then launched into a somewhat elliptical discourse on Vietnam's religious

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geography, arguing that registration of Protestant churches in Vietnam's Northwest needed to take into account the disruption that the churches' teachings on equality would have on the patrilineal social structure of the minority peoples there. Charge responded forcefully urging the GVN to ensure implementation of Vietnamese law in these areas.

#### A Sharp, Short Exchange on the Human Rights Report

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¶12. (SBU) DG Trung was much more direct in his criticisms of the recently released Human Rights report, calling the report "crazy" and "counterproductive." The CDA responded that the Department endeavors to make the Report as objective as possible and invited the MFA to provide specific evidence of any inaccuracies. While not intended to be provocative or unfriendly, the Report could not help but take note of developments such as the continuing arrests of political dissidents, particularly those tied to Bloc 8406; the conviction of the journalists who reported on the PMU-18 corruption scandal; and the sacking of editors and publishers. The GVN should be confident enough to tolerate -- and benefit from -- dissent, she stressed.

PALMER